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February 27, 2023

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Before the Finance Committee

In Support of H.B. No. 5673 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REFORMATION OF CERTAIN TAXES AND TAX EQUITY

Good Morning Senator Fonfara, Representative Horn and members of the Committee, my name is Julio Reyes and I work in the Young Adult Services Division of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services in the River Valley Services location. I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 5673.

Public sector safety net healthcare services exist to make sure no one – regardless of race, gender, zip code, immigration status, or insurance coverage – is turned away from the lifesaving care they need. Connecticut should be a shining example for the nation where every family has what we need to live a good life. Instead, one of every three healthcare positions are unfilled in state agencies creating a vacuum of lifesaving services. The scale of this crisis demands a bold response—people are suffering and our state has a responsibility, and has the resources to enact policies that provide for Connecticut families.

I have dedicated my professional life to helping young people with mental health challenges. The work that I do has been my greatest source of insight into what it means to be vulnerable and how close we may all be sometimes to approaching tragedy. The people I work with have often survived extreme circumstances at a young age. This fact sets them on a path fraught with compounding challenges. Trauma rewires the brain so that it becomes less effective in school and on the job and makes forming and navigating relationships difficult. The conditions these young people live in are at or near poverty, with the poor health outcomes that accompany life without enough money.

Together we have the resources to create a state where every single kid has what they need to get the best start in life. A place where everyone has good healthcare to lead healthy lives, a good job to support their families, and a safe place to call home. Lawmakers can fund a Recovery For All by passing a package that looks forward and

provides relief to those who are struggling. Will we begin a new normal - one that is more just and considers our shared humanity?

They say the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago; and the next best time is today. Today is your chance as lawmakers to make it -- not right-- but better. Please pass House Bill 5673. Thank you for your time.